The Vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon Kinship
Georg Pfeffer

Citer ce document / Cite this document:

Document généré le 29/03/2016
Georg Pfeffer, The Vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon Kinship. — Kinship terms in the Germanic language of the Anglo-Saxons can be reconstructed for the male side only, since the terms for females have been neglected by historical linguistics. But even with this partial knowledge, Lounsbury’s thesis regarding Germanic systems of kin classification can be rejected. The details of the Anglo-Saxon nomenclature reveal deviations from Lounsbury’s «Omaha Type III». When the idea of diachronic affinity is given due recognition, however, the Anglo-Saxon nomenclature may be viewed as a system of alternating symmetric exchange. As such, a prescription would imply direct contradictions to the canonical rules disqualifying «prohibited degrees» of relatives; the pre-Christian terminological order can be reconstructed only by a close comparison of Old English and Old German kinship terms.

I. INTRODUCTION

More than twenty years ago, Floyd G. Lounsbury (1964: 375) made it «abundantly clear that the early Latin and early Germanic kinship systems were Omaha systems based on this [i.e. «Type III»] skewing rule». So far, this view has not been disputed in detail, although some scholars have not admitted the general existence of «Omaha» systems as such. In addition to this general rejection, this article will probe into the details of Germanic vocabulary of kinship to show their incompatibility with the elaboration of Lounsbury’s «Omaha Type III». I shall also suggest other relational prerogatives with regard to the patterning of Germanic vocabulary.

Such suggestions add to an earlier discussion of medieval German vocabulary which suffered from inadequate data with regard to G0 (Pfeffer 1985: 58-59). In the course of the argument, it will become clear why such inadequacies have to be admitted. The Anglo-Saxon scheme, on the other hand, offers a straightforward picture in G0, but lacks the German elaboration in G2. This article will concentrate on the Old English pattern with occasional references to the closely related Old German scheme when the latter is able to offer answers to the questions left open by the former.

Before entering into ethnographic detail, it is necessary to set out certain methodological premises. The first issue is that of comparison. This article does not discuss « systems of Indo-European kinship ». The Indo-European vocabulary is undoubtedly of common origin, but it has been exposed to varying historical influences in ancient as well as medieval times. To conceive of a common terminological system would deny the particular historical developments of Indo-European languages. Greek and Latin, for example, were exposed to the standards of a bureaucratic administration for an extended period, as compared with Anglo-Saxon or Old High German. No « classificatory system » of relationship has been found within the Mediterranean languages, but I am suggesting that such a system should have been registered in Old German and Anglo-Saxon vocabularies. Indo-Europeanists of the past have mistakenly chosen, without considering variant historical developments, the Latin (or Sanskrit) vocabulary of kinship as the frame of reference for patterns in other languages. My own comparisons will be applied only to a limited number of systems and not to a limited number of elements in the almost unlimited number of systems of Indo-European languages.

This article does not make any attempt to view individual terms of kinship vocabulary as the outcome of societal behaviour. It also avoids conclusions, drawn from the vocabulary, with regard to behavioural norms. Conjectures about the mutual relationship between the pattern of behavioural rules and the pattern of classification are the most common source of misunderstanding in the analysis of « kinship systems ». The issue is intricate, because behavioural patterns indicate the potential of classificatory possibilities. However classification can, at times, develop its own contradictions and manipulative opportunities. An analysis of the behavioural (and normative) framework must remain independent of the terminological analysis. Only after such mutually exclusive analyses may historical changes and influences be considered.

The problem can be illustrated by arguments from Emile Benveniste (1973). At times this author uses commonsense arguments to explain the lack of certain terms by behavioural observations. For example, the general viricentrism of sources and scholars seems normal since : « ... for a man, there is no necessity to distinguish by specific terms relatives of his wife, since he does not co-habit with them » (ibid. : 167). At other times this author advances conjectures based upon vocabulary about certain institutions. In the present example of viricentrism, the argument is reversed : « ... we decide that these terms [...] always strictly applied to the relations established by the wife [...] We would then have to assume that the patriarchal system triumphed at an early date » (ibid. : 204).

This article does not « explain » the basic pattern of vocabulary by observed norms or behaviour. Similarly it in no way « explains » historical norms or behaviour by reference to terms alone. It is concerned only with the vocabulary as such. The norms and behaviour of early (pre-Christian) Central European affinity have recently been discussed by an author who cannot be
accused of any sympathy with alliance theory (Goody 1983). The object of my investigation into the formal properties of Central European kinship vocabularies is to elucidate the basic difference of the medieval patterns as compared with the modern order. At present terms are part of an analytical bias of our current cultural values, while the former systems operate within the classificatory framework of analogies like the well-known systems of America, Oceania or India. The old order is characterized by collective oppositions, not by the designation of individuals. Such collective juxtapositions of a «classificatory system» seem to contradict the behavioural regulations of the Christianized Europeans who abrogated a tendency towards «marriage to close kin» (ibid.: 42-43).

The regular repetition of affinal links between «close kin» probably coincided with an ordered system of alliance. Such a system would have been accompanied by a typical «alliance terminology», i.e. a terminological arrangement indicating diachronic affinal exchange. With the introduction of Christian marriage prohibitions, the old terminological arrangement probably did not disappear immediately. But some of the most obvious contradictions between behavioural norms and traditional vocabulary were bound to demand solutions. The most striking contradictions would have been those directly negating the new marriage prohibitions. In «alliance terminology», ego’s affinal partner is a «diachronic affine», or the successor of previous affines, not a new relation. An individual designated as such an affinal partner might be related «by blood» as well, and thus be disqualified from marriage by canonical law. Ego’s spouse, in other words, was a «close kin» in the former system. With the introduction of Christianity, either of these two statuses could be retained, but not both. If — in a hypothetical vocabulary of kinship — the term X had stood for «spouse» as well as «cousin», the newly introduced canonical laws would have left no alternative but to specialize the meaning of this term, to change it to either «spouse» or «cousin».

2. THE ANGLO-SAXON TERMS

When reconstructing the pattern of Anglo-Saxon kinship vocabulary, two kinds of diagram may be employed. The first implies the modern commonsense notion of the primacy of genealogical over affinal relationships. This conventional type of kinship diagram usually places an individual at its centre. A vertical line connects «ego» with «parents» and «children». The plurality of the latter as «siblings» is marked with a horizontal line; and parents are connected by equation marks to show that they are «spouses». Ego’s generation, as well as that below ego, is normally filled by pairs of «siblings» only, while the upper generations contain pairs of «spouses». If any «in-laws» are marked, conventional diagrams represent them as «spouses» of the genealogical relatives who are primarily connected by vertical or horizontal lines. By
this technique, their status is an addition to the core of the diagram. Usually a second or third graph is added to accommodate the remaining « in-laws » at a formally inferior level. The Anglo-Saxon terms\(^2\) (as taken from Buck 1949 : 95-123) may be presented in this traditionally familiar but deceptive manner (fig. 1). The very same terms may also be presented without ego. This alter-

![Genealogical presentation of Anglo-Saxon terms.](image)

native gives equal weight to genealogical and affinal relationships, stressing the pattern of the whole instead of summarizing ego-alter relationships. This alternative is employed in figures 2 to 4. As far as Anglo-Saxon vocabulary is concerned, diagrams can only present the male perspective, since all previous accounts in the original sources, as well as in the works of scholars, suffer from the familiar disease of viricentrism\(^3\).
Central relationships

The Anglo-Saxon *brother* is not simply a « brother »; the old term also included « more distant kin » (Campbell 1905: 6), such as « sons » of the « maternal aunt » \(^4\). It is quite certain that a *brother* is the « parallel cousin » in anthropological jargon. Buck’s account mentions a quite different term in the same position, but it is part of an altogether separate system, an expression of the parallel technique of descriptive compounding instead of the technique of collective juxtapositions. This parallel mode is the substantialist alternative to the relational system. It covers all positions of the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, monopolizing the major part of G2. Anglo-Saxons were also able to single out a category much narrower than « parallel cousins ». This *æwe-gebrother* was one of two « brothers by the same marriage » or « germani fratres » (Campbell 1905: 5). The marker *æwe* has nothing to do with biology, its literal meaning being close to « law » (Kluge 1967: 152). In fact, the Anglo-Saxons stressed the legal tie uniting the « parents » and not their status as genitor or genetrix.

Buck fails to mention another term for our current notion of « cousin ». There can be no doubt that the Anglo-Saxon *swor* or *sweor* (Bosworth 1950: 949; Schoof 1900: 279; Campbell 1905: 124; Holthausen 1932: 337) is the « cross cousin » in anthropological jargon, since the « parallel cousin » can easily be identified as *brother*\(^5\). All scholars of Anglo-Saxon have registered a second meaning of *sweor*, namely « father-in-law ». It follows that *sweor* — even as « cousin » — is equated with an affine, but never as a direct affine. As a « father-in-law », the *sweor* is the predecessor in the line of the direct affine of G0. As the so-called « cross cousin », he is the immediate successor of the direct affine of G+1, the « maternal uncle » (or « paternal aunt »). Unquestionably, these formal documents present the *sweor* preceding or succeeding the direct affines.

As a result of the above-mentioned equation, there can be no doubt that *sweor* belongs to two separate terminological lines. Used in this sense, a « line » has nothing to do with corporate groups, e.g. lineages\(^6\). It is a formal expression marking parallel affinal oppositions in successive generations. Terms make up a « line » if they are in successive positions of diachronic affinal opposition. Both of the lines of the Anglo-Saxon *sweor* contain direct affines. This fact stresses the affinal status of *sweor*. But as an indirect affine, *sweor* must be directly involved with yet another line of so-called « quasi-consanguines »\(^7\) implied by the alternating rhythm of direct and indirect affines. As a result, an overall structure of four lines is implied; it is less cumbersome than the well-known Australian « four-line » systems of symmetric affinal exchange, although it prescribes the same rhythm of alternation.

*Sweor* as « cousin » is not unique to Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. The North Frisians (Phillpotts 1913: 155), the Saxons (Delbrück 1889: 512) and the people of Flanders (Seebohm 1902: 139) appear to have used the very same term (as *swira, suiri,* and *zweer* respectively). Schoof (1900: 279) has also
reconstructed the terms for « husband's brother » in Anglo-Saxon, showing how tacor was historically followed by athum and svehur. The last is just another transcription of sweor. The « cross cousin », therefore, must have been someone like the modern « brother-in-law ».

All Indo-European languages used to operate with the pronoun stem sve-, svo-, sbei-, svoi-, etc., which is said to indicate « own » (Friedrich 1966 : 9-11). At the same time, it is said to define affines. The shortest translation could, therefore, refer to « own affines ». Schrader (1904-1905 : 20-25) has, however, emphasized a more specific meaning. Words containing this stem referred to « less closely related consanguines and later affines as well », but the « basic meaning » amounts to « Heiratsverwandter » or « relative by marriage ». The etymology of sweor (with its clear indications of an affinal status) has been a problem to all scholars who are used to the current individualistic or genealogical system of terms but are too meticulous to ignore other regularities. Delbrück, for example, states that the term for « cousin » has little to do with that for « sibling ». The facts force him to stress the absence of a word for « spouse » or « marriage ». Regarding marital unions, the old terms simply stress the wedding ceremony. The partners of the union are called wer, ceorl (Anglo-Saxon) or manna (Old German), all of which refer to a « man » only. Furthermore, an individual partner also appeared as the « master of the house » or hus-bonda (Bosworth 1950 : 568).

The same idea is forcefully expressed by Paul Friedrich (1966 : 27) : « A morpheme for cousin cannot be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European, nor for some of the daughter languages such as Common Slavic. This would suggest that cousin types were classed with other relatives. » Friedrich therefore offers the idea « that father's brother's children were classed with siblings, while cross cousins were classed with spouses ». In the end he rejects this idea on account of the historical argument that : « in many patrilineal societies, conflicts over inheritance and succession to authority combine to make the connection of such parallel cousins either ambivalent or marked by hostility » (ibid.). This less satisfactory sociological reasoning should not overshadow the outstanding formal insights of the linguist'.

In the specific case of Anglo-Saxon relationship terms, many authors (e.g. Lancaster 1958 : 235) report in G0 the more general geswiria which has the same root as sweor. Like genefa (Schoof 1900 : 258) or gebrother (Campbell 1905 : 5) or the German « Gevatter », « Brüder » and « Geschwister », this word represents the Germanic elliptic dual (Delbrück 1889). It is not particular to any one of the two sexes and should be translated as « affine », as Benecke (1866, II, 2 : 767) was perhaps the first to point out.

The remaining term of G0 is athum which the extensionist school has taken as an indicator of an « Omaha »-type (see Lounsbury 1971 : 271). One of the so-called « skewing rules » could be invoked to mark it as « Type III » (Lounsbury 1964 : 372). An athum is the « spouse » of both the « sister » and the « daughter ». During a limited historical period he was also the « husband's
brother» (Schoof 1900: 279). Like sweor, athum is a term that appears in successive generations. But whereas the former preceded and succeeded direct affines, the latter is such a direct affine. An athum is formally preceded in his line by a sweor.

The reciprocal of athum within G0 has not been discussed elaborately. Such a «wife’s brother» might have been equated with athum’s other reciprocal (the «father-in-law» in G + 1), but such asymmetry is reported nowhere. Schoof, on the other hand, translates athum as «Schwestermann» and «Schwager», or as «sister’s husband» as well as «brother-in-law» (1900: 270). As two separate translations are introduced side by side, they must be understood to refer to the two types of «brother-in-law». As such, they point to a symmetric structure.

If the Anglo-Saxon sweor were the «wife’s brother» as well as the «cross cousin», the «wife» would have to be the «cross-cousin». Under these circumstances, she could not be the «daughter» of the sweor (or the «father-in-law») of G + 1, but would have to be the «daughter» of the «maternal uncle» or a separate category altogether. For purely formal reasons then, athum’s reciprocal in G + 1 cannot be the same as athum’s reciprocal in G0.

The repetition of the sweor-athum connection in successive generations can be proposed as a hypothesis only. It is impossible to prove this repetition, as it would be a striking deviation from the canonical marriage norms. A sweor in the Christianized communities (of our sources) could only be either the «cousin» or the «father» of a «child’s spouse» and not both at the same time.

Our comparative approach may, however, add a little plausibility to the «alliance» hypothesis. In the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary (and the Saxon, Frisian and Flemish nomenclatures), the sweor is a «cousin». In Old High German, however, we meet the term gegen-sweher (Delbrück 1889: 528 and Schoof 1900: 278). This is the sweher (sweor) «opposite» ego in GO. The «father» of a «child’s spouse» was called by the same name (in a slightly different transcription) in Old High German as the «cross cousin» was called in the closely related Anglo-Saxon. This identity was stressed by the qualifying marker gegen- which clarified the generation of the type of sweher in question and the opposition as such. In some German regions (e.g., Odenwald) the prefix was not applied however (Schoof 1900: 279). Thus some German dialects (together with Flemish and Anglo-Saxon) kept the meaning of «cousin» whereas other German dialects used the same term.

\[\text{Fig. 2. Central equations (male terms only).}\]
in the same generation to refer to the « father-in-law » of ego's « son » or « daughter ». None of these languages (in the sources provided by Christian authors) accepted the term for both positions simultaneously since such usage would have been incompatible with Christian marriage laws. But the fact that both usages have survived in the most closely related Germanic languages points to a pre-Christian equation. Such affinal relationships may be presented in a diagram quite different from the one stressing genealogy. Instead of references to genitors and our axiomatic egocentrism, the categories of consanguines are marked as opposed to those of affines\(^8\) (fig. 2).

Marginal relationships

*In G + 1 the term eam (« maternal uncle ») is of considerable importance. Etymologically, it is a contraction of the Old German oheim (Lessor 1974 : 146) or an expression of the Proto-Indo-European awyos (Friedrich 1966 : 23). In the past, scholars of historical linguistics devoted considerable attention to this word, tracing it in Lycian, Hittite or Lithuanian (Friedrich 1966 : 24) or the more familiar Slavic, Celtic, or Germanic languages. We may call it the avus-avunculus complex for our present purposes. Friedrich has also associated it with Latin ava (for the more usual matertera), and other scholars have placed it in the « lower half » of the diagram as Latin aviatricus for nepos in G—1 and G—2 (Zimmermann 1903-1904 : 339).

As far as the Anglo-Saxon system in concerned, Schoof (1900 : 233) points to the usual equation of eam in G + 1 (« maternal uncle ») and eam in G + 2 (« grandfather »). But this is not all. At the same time, eam is the equivalent of the Latin conius amitiae (ibid.), or the « husband of the paternal aunt » as well. Thus the Anglo-Saxons have ordered this category like the Omaha tribesmen of Nebraska (Dorsey 1884). There is no way of forcing it into some « in-law-class ». The equation also clearly marks the direct reciprocity between the lines of « father » and « maternal uncle » respectively.

The Anglo-Saxon terms of faeder (« father ») and faedera (« paternal uncle ») point to but minor differences between lineal and collateral terms. These two terms must be seen as « parts of a wide category [...] subdivided [...] on a secondary level which does not interest us here » (Dumont 1983 : 25). Thus Morgan's lineal distinction of the Aryan systems (see Morgan 1871 : 143) is not present in the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. Only in modern European systems with an individualistic emphasis is the « father » identified with the genitor. With regard to ancient Indo-European languages, scholars have explicitly stated that the two meanings are not to be confounded : « Man dachte bei dem Worte pitar nicht an den Vater als Erzeuger » (Delbrück 1889 : 446).

The sunu of G—1 appears to be the modern « son ». But the « parallel nephew » shares the reciprocal of sunu. The separate identity of such a « parallel nephew » has not been elaborated in a convincing manner. Etymologists occasionally mention a suhteriga, suhtriga or suhtria as the term for a
man’s « brother’s son », but — quoting from Beowulf — Schoof (1900 : 265) introduces suhtor as well (see also Bosworth 1950 : 263 ; Holthausen 1932 : 329). This suhtor bears the same suffix that is found in dohotor, brothor, swestor, faeder, and modor. The stem displays a marked similarity to sunu. In any case, the category is defined by opposition to nefa (Schoof 1900 : 265), the « cross nephew ». Friedrich mentions the possibility that the « brother’s children [...] may have been lumped together with a man’s own children » (1966 : 47) ; and many other authors (e.g. Campbell 1905 : 47) refer to the special juxtaposition of nefa and eam or the classical intergenerational « cross » relationship. As a result, nefa must have been the successor in the line of athum, the direct affine already mentioned. As nefa is positioned in G±1 and athum is a direct affine of this very generation, nefa cannot be a direct affine — he is bound to be an indirect affine, as sweor is in G+1 and G0.

In the remaining generation, G−2, nefa reappears as a « grandson » (Wright 1903 : 251). Etymologists have not specified the kind of « grandson », but Onions (1966 : 607) states that « nephew » was a « Common Indo-European term denoting indirect descent ». It seems that the word « indirect » can be understood as the « cross » of anthropological jargon. In the male perspective, nefa would then come to mean « daughter’s son ». Such an interpretation is supported by comparative cases in Old Norwegian, where Bjerke (1969 : 50) has found nefa in the « cross » relationships of the lower generations. This final term closes the account of the (male) version of the « classificatory system » in the Anglo-Saxon language. The lack of terms in the line of consanguines (G+2 and G−2) is evident. The Old German ane (G+2) and its diminutive eniclein (G−2) are absent. Only in the three central generations are consanguines represented by faeder (G+1), brothor (G0), and sunu/suhtor (G−1) respectively.

The striking feature of the Anglo-Saxon system is the affinal side, where two alternating affinal lines are represented by only four terms. Each one of these four terms is present in two successive generations (fig. 3). A certain irregularity may call for attention. Of the four affinal categories, three (sweor, athum, nefa) are identified as indirect or direct affines whereas the fourth, eam, has an uncertain affinal status in G+2. This uncertainty allowed Benveniste (1973 : 182-183) to envisage « moieties » and their symmetric order of exchange. Under such conditions, the « father’s father » would be the « maternal uncle » of the « maternal uncle ». As has been mentioned above (Footnote 1), a system of « moieties » is in no way implied by the Anglo-Saxon order.

At the same time, the condition of G2 does not offer clearcut alternatives. It fails to introduce a « four-line » symmetric order of affinal exchange in the « Australian » style9, leaving most positions to be filled by descriptive compounding only. Thus the alternating rhythm of alliance is not marked by the « Australian » opposition of odd and even generations but by the same terms marking separate lines in subsequent generations. In this manner, alter-
nation is articulated without the cumbersome « Australian » constructions of the central generations. Such simplification is punished at the margins. Thus in G + 1, an *eam* must be associated with his « wife » (*fathu*) and his « sister » (*modor*). The « wife » of the equivalent *eam* (« grandfather ») in G + 2 could hardly be equated with *fathu* in a « four-line system », just as the « grandfather’s sister » could never be *modor*. Given such contradictions, a nomenclature that does not oppose odd and even generations must leave the affinal oppositions of G2 in the dark.

This ambiguous aspect of the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary of kinship may be lessened by the comparative method. While the Old English nomenclature leaves the question of the marginal generations open, the Old German nomenclature of the « southern » kind (Pfeffer 1985) may provide a solution. The « paternal grandfather » (and « grandmother ») *ane* and the diminutive *eniclein* (« grandchild ») serve to oppose *veter* (the Anglo-Saxon *faeder*) of G1 and thus articulate the alternating rhythm of the generations. An
« Australian » opposition of odd and even on the consanguinal side (Old German) could be the complement of the Anglo-Saxon elaboration of the affinal side, alternating allied lines.

The Old German pattern leaves a gap within G0, where the Old English scheme leaves no uncertainties. The Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, on the other hand, is quite ambiguous in G2, whereas the Old German scheme can clarify those oppositions. Each of the two closely related vocabularies can complete the other and reinforce the elementary idea of alternating symmetric exchange (see fig. 4).

![Fig. 4. Old English and Old German systems compared (male terms only).](image)

3. « Omaha » Equivalence?

The formula of Lounsbury’ Type III « Omaha »-system has been meticulously elaborated so that little doubt about the « skewing rule » and its implications remains. In a very simple exercise, it can be seen if « a man’s SISTER, as a linking relative, [can] be regarded as equivalent to that man’s DAUGHTER as a linking relative » (Lounsbury 1964 : 372). The theorist has himself illustrated the working of the rule by regarding « mother ’s brother’s son », « mother’s father’s son » and « mother’s father » as equivalent (ibid.). In Anglo-Saxon, *sweor* would thus have to be equated with *eam*, but this is obviously impos-
sible. Nor can *sweor* as a « father’s sister’s son » be equated with *nefa*, the « sister’s » or the « daughter’s son » (see Lounsbury 1964 : 373). Sources do not contain the slightest hint about the corresponding « equivalences » on the female side that are given in Lounsbury’s detailed illustrations.

These evident discrepancies lead to the basic dilemma of Lounsbury’s approach : under the circumstances, he should have no difficulty creating an additional « Omaha » type (e.g. No. V) that would include the Germanic patterns described herein. The *superclass* « Omaha » could thus be « rescued » by the addition of a new *subclass*. This venture would, however, demonstrate little more than the logic of classes as such, rather than the relational concepts of early Europeans. It would continue to ignore the relevance of pre-modern ideas of marriage. These ideas centre upon the diachronic character of affinity. Contrary to modern Euro-American axioms of voluntarism, individualism and substantialism, they stress the involuntary, collective and relational nature of affinal ties. They lack our common notion of individual decision-making as cause of some temporary union. Pre-modern affinity defines relations of a primary or permanent kind. This important « message » of primitive classification has been ignored by all summaries of ego-alter relationships, even if they — proceeding as they do from the individual to the whole — happen to generalize certain conspicuous regularities.

In opposition to commonsense views, proponents of « alliance theory » have demonstrated the diachronic nature of affinity within systems of symmetric or asymmetric exchange. Regarding the former, their work has concentrated upon the analysis of what may be called « two-line » systems of affinal exchange. These simple dualities, however, do not present the whole picture of symmetric possibilities of classification. The well-known « four-line » systems of Australia appear to have been treated as ethnographic special cases. Comparable native American systems, though differing only in minor details, have been left unstudied. « Four-line » systems happen to be much more cumbersome. They must adjust to the problem of classifying pairs in the upper generations, i.e. « spouses », like pairs in the lower generations, i.e. « siblings ». As is shown in the well-known Australian examples, these technical prerequisites lead to certain impediments which have to be overcome by uneasy manipulations.

The Anglo-Saxon order avoids the cumbersome arrangement of the central generations in Australian « four-line » systems by the straightforward articulation of alternating ties. An *athum* of G0 is of a very different line of affines as compared with an *athum* of G − 1. An *eam* of G + 1 has a different affinal counterpart as compared with an *eam* of G + 2. The « sons » of any *eam* or *athum* do not continue the same affinal opposition that defined their « fathers ». They have been prescribed variant (undefined) counterparts without further specification. Compared with the symmetric Australian systems of « four-line » affinal exchange, the Anglo-Saxon order contains the same « message » of alternation within a simplified setup. But the cost of this
simplification, or the room left to manipulations, is the ambiguity of the external generations of G2.

Free University of Berlin

NOTES

1. Benveniste (1973; French original 1969) recounts the general discussion by German Indo-Europeanists (philologists, jurists and historians) between 1860 and 1925, but on certain important issues, this author deviates from the established views. His insistence upon the fact that the Latin avus did not originally carry the meaning of «maternal grandfather» (1973: 182-183), for example, is supported only by the fact that scholars have been unaware of the relevance of such genealogical specification. Benveniste's «theoretical» argument against avus as «maternal grandfather» is untenable since it depends upon the hypothesis that «in a system of classificatory kinship, no special importance is attributed to the 'mother's father' » (ibid.). In reality however, the special term for «mother's father» in contrast with that for «father's father» makes all the difference between the so-called Kariara system as compared with the so-called Dravidian system (see Dumont 1983: 183). In fact, Benveniste equates his «classificatory system» with what may be called a «two-line» system of affinal exchange. But certain elements in the Latin (or Anglo-Saxon) vocabulary exclude this possibility. Separate terms for «father-in-law» (against «maternal uncle») and «nephew» (against «son-in-law») imply an order different from the «two-line» system.

2. Diacritical marks and the special phonetic letters have been omitted here for the sake of simplicity.

3. Due to the obvious lack of data for the female side—most accounts were taken from (male dominated) sagas or early translations of the Bible—adequate treatment cannot be given to the problems arising from the fact that relations between «siblings» are overrepresented in the lower generations whereas those between «spouses» characterize the upper generations. In the Anglo-Saxon scheme, the equation of sweor («father-in-law» and «cousin») gives rise to speculations about female counterparts. In G+1, sweor's counterpart is his wife sweger. In G0 however, the Germanic dual, geswiga (Hall 1970: 330, 332) or geswiria (Lancaster 1958: 235), must have referred to a man's female «cousin». While this way of using a neutral term for the cross-sex «cousin» is given for a male ego, corresponding data for the female side have not been collected.

4. This is evident from the Biblical example given by Campbell (ibid.).

5. In translations, linguists are unconcerned about this anthropological differentiation. The case of the «cousin» may thus be seen as a parallel to that of the «grandfather».

6. Goodenough (1970: 83-84) seems to imply that alternatives to his individualistic analysis require «marital exchanges or alliances between agnates» or «moieties». Otherwise, he simply ignores alliance theory. Keesing (1975: 110) describes the «difficulties» of the «alliance interpretation» as resting in the fact that terminologies of symmetric prescription can be found in societies without moieties, lineages «or even [...] cognatic descent groups». Such dependency upon corporate groups is, however, entirely alien to modern alliance theory (i.e. Dumont 1968). Kuper (1982: 87) even goes so far as to state: «Alliance theory [...] postulated the existence of a segmentary organization of unilineal descent groups.» This is a complete misunderstanding, since alliance theory is concerned with structures of thinking, not structures of grouping.

7. This technical term, introduced by Vatuk (1969: 101), stands for those who, being also affinal partners of «own» affines, share relations without being genealogical consanguines.

8. Such a sociocentric diagram is usually applied to all those systems of symmetric affinal prescription that imply periodicity, or the regular repetition of terms in alternating generations, marking alternating alliances. The specific problems of such systems may be exposed in this manner. Thus the Aranda distinguish the sex of some (but not all) members of G1 in contrast to the regular indistinct use of a single category in other generations. This technique of evading certain inherent contradictions of the intergenerational «mirroring» is supplemented by the distinction of «own children» from others in the same relational positions (see Spencer & Gillen 1927: 41-61).

9. The Aranda method of equating cross-sex siblings overcomes any ambivalence in this generation as far as the perspective of a male ego is concerned. A female perspective, on the other hand, suffers from the same uncertainties that mark the Anglo-Saxon scheme in G2 (see Spencer & Gillen 1927: 41-61).
BIBLIOGRAPHY

BENECKE, G. F.
1866 Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch. Leipzig.

BENVENISTE, É.

BIERKE, R.

BOSWORTH, J.

BUCK, C. D.

CAMPBELL, C. D.

DELBRÜCK, B.

DORSEY, J. O.

DUMONT, L.
1983 Affinity As a Value. Marriage Alliance in South India, with Comparative Essays on Australia. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

FRIEDRICH, P.

GOODENOUGH, W.

GOODY, J.
1983 The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe. Cambridge, CUP.

HALL, J. R. C.

HOLTHAUSEN, F.

KEESING, R. M.

KLUGE, F.
Anglo-Saxon Kinship

KUPER, A.

LANCASTER, L.

LEXER, M.

LOINSBURY, F.

MORGAN, L. H.
1871 Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family. Washington, DC (« Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge » XVII).

ONIONS, C. T.

PFEFFER, G.

PHILLPOTTS, B. S.
1913 Kindred and Clan. London.

SCHOOF, W.

SCHRADER, O.

SEEBOHM, F.
1902 Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon Law. London.

SPENCER, B. & F. J. GILLEN

VATUK, S.

WRIGHT, J.

ZIMMERMANN, A.
RÉSUMÉ

Georg PFEFFER, La Terminologie de parenté anglo-saxonne. — On ne peut reconstituer la terminologie de parenté anglo-saxonne (de langue germanique) que pour les hommes, la linguistique historique ne faisant pas état de termes féminins. Mais même sur ces bases partielles, la thèse de Lounsbury relative aux systèmes de classification germaniques peut être rejetée. Un examen détaillé de la nomenclature anglo-saxonne révèle des écarts significatifs par rapport au « Type Omaha III » de Lounsbury. Toutefois, dès lors que l'idée d'une affinité diachronique est admise, cette nomenclature peut être considérée comme un système d'échanges symétriques à chaque génération. En tant que telle, toute prescription serait en contradiction directe avec les règles canoniques disqualifiant les parents de degrés prohibés. La terminologie préchrétienne ne peut être reconstituée qu'en comparant strictement les termes de parenté de l'ancien anglais et de l'ancien allemand.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG


RESUMEN

Georg PFEFFER, La Terminología del parentesco anglo-sajón. — Se puede reconstituir los términos del parentesco anglo-sajón (de lengua germánica) sólo para los hombres, ya que la linguística histórica carece de términos femeninos. Pero incluso sobre estas bases parciales, la tesis de Lounsbury relativa a los sistemas de clasificación germánicos puede ser rechazada. Un examen detallado de la nomenclatura anglosajona revela diferencias significativas con relación al tipo « Omaha III » de Lounsbury. Sin embargo, desde el momento en que la idea de una afinidad diacrónica es admitida, esta nomenclatura puede considerarse como un sistema de intercambios simétricos en cada generación. Como tal, toda prescripción estaría en contradicción directa con las reglas canónicas que descalifican a los parientes de grados prohibidos. La terminología pre-cristiana no puede reconstituirse sino comparando estrictamente los términos de parentesco de las lenguas inglesa vieja y alemana vieja.